The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

APRIL, 1950

The Christian Idea of the Future Life

By HERBERT BOOTH SMITH

The Vindication of the Cross

By EARL H. FURGESON

Reality Breaks Through

By R. P. MARSHALL

The Stone at the Door

By CLAIR M. COOK

The Furnished Room

By RAYMOND E. BALCOMB

The Peril of an Inadequate Religion

By ELDEN H. MILLS

On Being Original

By F. GERALD ENSLEY

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Charles Clayton Morrison, *Editor*

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THE DIGNITY OF MAN, by Lynn Harold Hough, is a bold vindication of the goodness both in God and in man. "True," says Dr. Hough, "man can be false to that for which he was made. But he cannot change the fact that he was made in the divine image."

LINKED LIVES is a Memorial Day sermon by Ralph W. Sockman, famed minister of the National Radio Pulpit.

THE TEMPLE AND ALCOHOL, by Herbert H. Parish, will stir a new resolve to do something about the "idol of revenue" which is causing such disastrous treachery in our land.

GIVE US PEACE IN OUR TIME, by Roy A. Burkhart, discusses two critical choices now before us. One is the choice between life and death. The second is the choice between freedom and regimentation. Mr. Burkhart concludes that "the source of peace lies within the human heart and human nature, and it can only be discovered and made available through the true church."

HOW HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK USES THE BIBLE IN PREACHING is an article by Eugene May who has made an enlightening study of Dr. Fosdick's sermon's contained in his volume, *The Hope of the World*. In a letter to Mr. May, Dr. Fosdick comments: "I think that you have understood my method in preaching very well."

Also there will be special sermons and illustrations appropriate for Mother's Day.

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

HERBERT BOOTH SMITH is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Burlingame, California. In 1941 he was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., and has just completed a term as Moderator of the Presbytery of San Francisco. Two sons, Herbert Booth Smith, Jr., and James Comfort Smith are also ministers in the Presbyterian Church, serving pastorates within a hundred miles of their father.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

THE DECISION of a local court in New York forbidding the Congregational Christian denomination to unite with the Evangelical and Reformed church has astonished not only the people of these two denominations, but the whole of American Protestantism. The court's ruling was based upon a purely legalistic interpretation of the principle of local church autonomy. It would almost seem that Judge Steinbrink deliberately intended to reduce the principle of Congregational autonomy to an absurdity. Under his interpretation, the only corporate entity capable of acting with legal effect is the local church. He denies the legal competence of any association or council of local churches or any connectional organization democratically representing the churches, to commit the denomination over the intransigent protest of any group of churches, or even of a single church, that may claim to represent the "basic principles, usages and polity" of Congregationalism. Thus, not even an overwhelming majority of Congregational churches could take into a union the missionary, benevolent, pension, and other boards with their property and endowments. These would be the property of a dissident minority which could claim legal continuity with the past. For the moment, this ruling has brought confusion and frustration into the merger movement which had seemed assured by the approval of over 72 per cent of the local churches. But it must be appealed! The Baptists and the Disciples of Christ have a stake in the final outcome of this issue. And, the whole ecumenical movement is involved in a construction of the law that would freeze the status quo of the denominational system. Neither historical nor contemporary Congregationalism has conceived itself as this ruling conceives it. To deny the principle of connectional and organic interdependence is as false to true Congregationalism as to deny the principle of local church autonomy.

A Ruling that Must Be Appealed!

The Book of the Month

THE HERITAGE OF THE REFORMATION, *by Wilhelm Pauck. The Beacon Press. $4.00.*

THIS BOOK is a gold mine—rich in historical information, trustworthy in its interpretation of both the origin and present status of Protestantism, and glowing with the unacademic fervor of a scholarship that knows it has something of profound importance to say to our generation. It is written by a historian whose orientation in the period of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin is hardly less vivid than his awareness of our contemporary scene. Under his hand the Reformation comes alive again. He shows how far modern Protestantism has departed from the teaching and intention of the Reformers and how inaccurate is much that passes for knowledge among us. Dr. Pauck maintains that the Reformers had no intention of breaking the historical continuity of the Christian Church. They were out to *reform* it, not in *revolt* against it. They conceived themselves as standing within the historical church. The concept of "restoring the primitive church" was alien to them. What they had found was not a primitive church that had been lost, but the Bible and the Christ of the Bible by which the living church must be purged of the ecclesiastical and moral corruption involved in the institution and pretensions of the papacy. He clearly shows how Protestantism itself departed from the pure spirit of the Reformation when it allowed the spiritual principle of justification by faith to be transmuted into the creedal principle of correct belief. Today, when our consciousness of being Protestant is steadily transcending our denominational consciousness, it is imperative that we become intelligent with respect to what Protestantism really is.

A Thought for the Month

FROM the human point of view, the greatness of Jesus is most sharply etched in the manner of his dying. The very soul of gentleness and tenderness, he met the scorn and scourge of brutal men with calm, unflinching dignity. Unawed before Pilate, he would be drawn into no unseemly argument, but answered the inquisitor's question, "Art thou, then, a king?" with a firm, "Thou hast said." He endured the crown of thorns and carried his cross until the flesh gave way, but there was no plaintive outcry. Hanging on the cross, his anguish seemed to be overborne by his concern for others. From God he asked forgiveness for those who knew not what they did. His self-possession, the utter poise of his spirit, was maintained unshaken until tarrying death released him. The New Testament speaks profoundly of the "grace" of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the very love of God manifested in him. Is there a connection between this superhuman grace and the human grace of Jesus' life and the manner of his dying? I do not wish to press the point. But I cannot help believing that the dignity of his carriage, his imperturbable self-possession in every situation in which his disciple companions beheld him, and most of all in his death, caused them to believe that he was no less than a messenger sent of God. The resurrection brought this home to them. It was the window through which they looked back on all that had happened.

The Dignity of Jesus In His Death

Charles Clayton Morrison

The Christian Idea of the Future Life

By HERBERT BOOTH SMITH

Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to life through the gospel.—II Timothy 1:10

STUDENTS OF RELIGION tell us that religion, in its lowest terms, consists of at least three affirmations. One is some sort of a belief in God. A second is a belief in some kind of future life. The third is some type of moral responsibility, carrying with it the idea of a future judgment.

There is a story which tells of the grief of a certain small boy on learning in school the doctrine that he in some way was descended from an animal. In great sorrow he came to his mother and asked: "Mother, is it true that I am descended from a monkey?" And the mother's consoling reply was: "No, not on your mother's side." This wise mother's answer is my point of departure, for I can face all evolutionists and say: "On my heavenly Father's side, I am not descended from the lower ranges of animal nature." For, as Jack London's Yorkshire man says: "There is summat in me beside the beast." There is a fragment of the life of the Eternal who parted with part of himself to give me being. The old story has never been displaced which says that the breath, i.e., the life and spirit of God, has entered my soul.

THE HIDDEN DESIRE

It is a little surprising, as Dr. Hillis remarked, that some people are so unwilling to have ascended progressively from an animal, but are quite willing to have come up directly from the clod. Either origin is good enough, he continued, provided man has ascended far enough from the clod or the animal, and has made some approach to the angel.

Possibly, immortality is not as much longed for in these practical days at it was in the more poetic times. People are so concerned with getting through this life that they are not much interested in another one.

Once when Sherlock Holmes heard a certain bit of poetry, he remarked that he would straightway forget it, as it could not be of the slightest help in his profession. Poetry doesn't affect the price of meat. You can't eat Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or Byron's *Childe Harold*. Comte, the humanist, advised his pupils never to study astronomy, since no useful rule could be got from the stars as to how men should order their lives. Idealism is not quoted above par today. Many folk are like the valley-dweller who objected to having his eyes "continually pulled up off the level by them mountains." Someone has said that the trouble with most of us is that we are content to do "truck farming on little tracts of the definite." We care not so much for the golden "Bye and Bye" as the leaden "Here and Now."

And yet, in our deepest and highest moments, when we take the glass-bottom boat of meditation and look down to the depths of our souls, most of us have some concern for life in a better world than this. In a strikers' parade some time ago, the marching mill-girls carried a banner with the words: "We want bread, but we want roses too." Bread represents satisfaction with the necessities of life; but roses stand for the beauty, the ideals, the dreams and aspirations which go beyond the eight-hour day. There is a bit of wise advice in Ecclesiastes which says: "Be not afraid of that which is high."

I imagine that if you could offer to the average person today the chance of prolonging indefinitely the kind of life he is living, he would decline your offer. But if, on the other hand, you tell him that there is a sphere in which he can go on doing his daily work on a higher level, with all the nagging annoyments of sin removed; in the presence of a Being of infinite love, where "Each for the joy of working, and each in his separate star, shall paint the thing as he sees it for the God of things as they are," probably he will desire such immortality as that. So, I observed with interest that the author of *Man's Tomorrow*—a book which presents the arguments for immortality in the light of modern scientific research—reasons out with care the existence and personality of God. *Existence* and *personality*! Unless there is a God, a future life will be useless; and unless that God is a Person, the future life will be lonely.

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

When William Blake, the poet, lay dying, he said he was going to that country he had wished to see all his life; and it is related that just before his death, he burst into singing of the things he saw. Somehow, explain it as you will, we all have the traveler's instinct and are never satisfied until we have visited the capitol of the soul-country which we familiarly call "heaven." As Paul said, "We must see Rome." When Charles Kingsley, another of these voyagers to the summer-land-of-soul, came to the last station on this side of the ferry; that is to say, when on his sick-bed, he lay on the boundary between the two worlds, he cried out, "God forgive me, but I look forward to it with an intense and reverent curiosity."

Now, it may be remarked that the hope of a future life is an unprovable hypothesis, the fond dream of a disordered imagination, to which we reply that an instinct is part of our spiritual capital which antedates proof; and the two chief instincts of humanity are God and immortality. Surely we cannot drown an instinct as

though its voice had no right to be heard; for instinct in its place is just as divinely implanted as conscience. And God has not given us our instincts to deceive us or to lead us astray. The instinct of hunger or thirst; of fear, of love, of modesty; all these, when we follow them, bring us out on the right road. Why should we suppose that the instinct of futurity is a blind path which abruptly ends in the boundless forest at a sign-post marked, "Lost"? Nay, as Professor Fiske says, from the view of the trained thinker, this outreaching after the unseen is not mere idealism; for if it is, it is something utterly without precedent in the process of evolution. It must be the beckoning of a distinct land somewhere beyond the forest darkness. There must be a turn in the road somewhere; somewhere "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Sometimes dreams are true. "I choose to be a dreamer," says Ernest Crosby, "a dreamer whose dreams come true." And it seems this dream which everybody is dreaming is likely to come true. The savage buries his weapons and utensils with the dead man, believing that he will need them in a future life. The Chinese takes with him rice to eat, and a coin to pay his passage across the river of death. Even the cultured Athenians went out to Eleusis twice every year and held a sort of retreat in the atmosphere of the Eleusianian mysteries in order that when they came to die they "might die with a fairer hope."

PERSONALITY IS SPIRIT

The unanimous judgment of the race is that there is somewhat more to us than our body. The primitive notion was that there was a sort of ghost or spirit which was a diminutive double of the body, residing in it and released at death—hence the whole theory of ghosts roaming about after the death of the body, some of them resembling the one passed away, and some of them in the likeness of a bird. Many uncultured peoples regard the soul as so independent of the body that it is prone to leave it on very slight occasion. In Celebes, they believe that the soul tends to leave the body by the natural openings, especially the mouth and nostrils. Hence, they often fasten fish-hooks to a sick man's nose and feet, so that if his soul should try to escape, it may be hooked and held fast. For the same reason, sneezing has been held as a very serious performance among primitive races, as it afforded opportunity for the sudden exit of the soul.

When we come to a later time, we find the soul regarded as a life-principle, organically connected with the body. It resides in the blood, then the breath, then the brain, then the pineal gland. When psychology came upon the field, it represented the soul as a substance in which the faculties inhere. Now, however, we have come to the days of the New Psychology when the soul is no longer regarded as a static substance but as a dynamic, spiritual person; so we talk more about personality and less about soul.

We have come to this point, then: personality is a guarantee of immortality. Science has committed itself to the doctrine of the persistence of energy, which asserts that energy never is annihilated. It may change its form, but can never die. We then raise the question: what is the most persistent form of energy of which we know? And the answer is, the highest form of persistence, despite change, that we know, is human personality. If every moment of my life, my body is in a state of slow conflagration and flux; if every particle of my body changes every seven years, what can there be about me at seventy which is the same that I possessed at seven? My clothes change, my views are altered, my appearance is so different that those who knew me at seven wouldn't believe their eyes as to my sameness; and yet I know I am the same, and this that knows—my soul, my self—is all that remains the same. Thus, since I am so independent of my body here and now, it seems that I ought to be independent enough of it to continue existence, even when it is laid away in the grave.

I once read an able sermon on *Power and Personality* from 2 Kings 18:23: "I will deliver thee two thousand horses if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them." The King of Assyria is parleying with the King of Judah for the surrender of Jerusalem. When Hezekiah remains firm, the Assyrian offers bribes. Among other things he offers two thousand horses. The text is suggestive: the need of personality to match power. One trouble with the world today is that personality has not grown in proportion to machinery. The whole problem of immortality is tied up with the problem of personality. If the human person is insignificant, there is no good reason why he should survive death. But if personality is a tremendous and sublime fact, belonging to a different category from machinery and things, then the question arises as to whether it should last longer than they.

LIFE MORE THAN EXISTENCE

Here come the teaching and life of Jesus to confirm the instincts of the race and the findings of science. We shall understand Jesus' teaching more clearly when we see that he distinguished between existence and life. In his use of words, life is *existence* plus *quality*. Take this familiar illustration (rephrased): A man came to Jesus and said, "Master, I will follow Thee, but suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus answered: "You follow me! come right along; let the dead bury their dead." Jesus was not playing with the man's grief; he was using words with exactness. Here is what he meant: "Those relatives of yours who are keeping watch at home, who haven't your vision, who care nothing about me, are just as dead as your father, for they are spiritually dead. You alone are alive. Now, let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. But you cling to this new life which I can give you. You follow me." Jesus' idea was that the man who was content with the things of time and sense was living in the scaffolding of the building; and when that was torn down to make way for the real structure, he would die since he had nowhere to live. So, if you had asked Jesus if you were going to live after death, he probably would have replied, "Do you live now? If so, you will live then, for death has no

power over life. But if you are dead now, even a funeral is unnecessary, for you will never be more dead than you are."

An old classic says that time is a parenthesis in eternity. That is what it was to Jesus. He came from God and he returned to God, and the thirty-three years from Bethlehem to Calvary were only an earthly parenthesis in a heavenly life. Now the same thing is true of us if we are living the higher life. We came forth from the divine hand; to it we return. The parenthesis runs from cradle to grave; and when the soul returns to its Maker the brackets are removed, and the whole sentence can be read complete. This longing to get out of the brackets explains the instinct with which we began our study.

How natural, therefore, that the poets, those seers of truth and beauty, have in all ages sung about the changes of endless life. Browning said that his sun set in order to rise again; and when Elizabeth Barrett was taken away from him, he kissed the stone steps of the church where they were married, and lived in expectation of seeing his own again when the mists had rolled away. Compare him with John Stuart Mill who bought a cottage near his wife's grave and lived in her memory, looking backward only, for he had nothing, with his lack of faith, to look forward to. And hear, finally, the judgment of Tennyson:

"Gone forever? No, for since our dying race began,
Ever, and forever was the leading light of man.
Those that in barbarian burials killed the slave and slew the wife,
Felt with themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night,
E'en the black Australian, dying, hopes he shall return a white.
Truth for truth, and good for good, the Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'Forever' from them, and they crumble into dust."

NATURE OF THE FUTURE LIFE

If we grant that there is another life, let us ask in closing, what shall be our Christian belief as to its nature? When we found that evolution gave us God, then we proceeded to show that Jesus had given us the highest kind of a God imaginable. Likewise, we might assume that if evolution gives us another life, we can easily show that Jesus has given us the highest possible conception of that future state. I wish every Christian could take a course in Comparative Religion, in order that we might compare Christianity with other systems of thought. We are so occupied with our own views, accepting them without much study, that we fail to see how unique and refined they are, unless we know how far below them many other systems fall.

If you ask me whether I want a second life, you must tell me what kind it is. When you offer me a second cup of coffee, my wanting a second cup will depend, in part, on what the first cup was like, and also on whether the second will be any improvement on the first. I may be like the tourist in England who said, "If this is tea, give me coffee."

Let us turn to Jesus and ask him what Christian immortality is like, because the adjective is more important than the noun. It is an axiom of theology that you can always test any theology by its eschatology. That is, you can judge the excellence of any system of faith and morals by its picture of the future life. Compare the teachings of Jesus with those of any of the great religions of the world, and then decide your allegiance. The faith of ancient Egypt tells at length of the sensual delights of the believer: delicious food, the shade of sycamores to protect from the heat, silver basins in which to wash the feet, and endless fields to cultivate and in which the corn grows to a height of seven cubits. The Brahman hopes to become a twice-born Yogi and to lose himself in Brahma, so that he can at last lift his dreamy eyes and mutter, "I am God, I am God." The Buddhist reaches the consummation and the end of life by conquering and killing all desire, until by inhaling the pungent scent of the lotus-flower, Nirvana is reached, and the tragedy of life ends in dreamless sleep. According to Confucianism, if I would be saved I must be a good citizen of China. But patriotism is hardly the same thing as religion. Islam divides heaven into eight divisions all of which are places of innumerable sensual joys: groves, fountains, fruits, and black-eyed houris without number for the faithful followers of the Prophet.

In a letter to a London paper, George Bernard Shaw said it would be a dreadful calamity to have this thing named Shaw go on forever, pouring out thousands of plays and millions of articles. He felt a time would come when he would want to go on his knees before God and ask if there wasn't some way of bringing this insufferable process to an end. But he said he couldn't conceive of personal immortality at all, unless in terms of going on just as now.

Jesus, however, offers a heaven which shall be the prolonging of the work begun here on a higher plane. The old idea of heaven as a kind of endless church service has lost its appeal in this modern age. The hymn which described heaven as a place "where congregations ne'er break up and sabbaths have no end" is not sung much these days. As Ian Maclaren says, "Heaven is not a Trappist Monastery; neither is it retirement on a pension. No, it is a land of continual progress." There is one translation of Jesus' familiar promise to the disciples which is very attractive. Instead of making him say, "In my Father's house are many mansions," this particular translation has him say, "In my Father's house are many stations." The word *stations* implies progress. If this reading is correct, what an endless opportunity for adventurous and abundant living. What an encouragement to all the lives which never "arrived" on earth, to all who were cut off before the song was sung and the picture painted and the vision realized.

Cheer up, beloved! Somewhere the ragged edges of our earthly work will be taken up and woven into a better pattern.

The Vindication of the Cross

By EARL H. FURGESON

Then is the offense of the cross ceased . . . God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Galatians 5:11 and 6:14

THE MAPS of Palestine reveal an interesting fact. Bethlehem is only seven miles from Calvary. The place where Jesus was born is only seven miles from the place where he was crucified. The little village where the whole creation rejoiced in the birth of a child is separated by a short quarter-day's journey from the place where the whole creation groaned and travailed at the crucifixion of a man. The visitation of an angel with a multitude of the heavenly host singing praises at the wonderful birth is uncomfortably close to the shaking of the earth and the darkening of the sky in convulsions of death. So close is Bethlehem to Calvary.

This accident of geography is a parable of an important truth. Both Bethlehem and Calvary were places of divine intervention, as birth and death always are. But the short distance between them suggests that our pilgrimage must be made in the light of that divine eternity which precedes, follows, and surrounds our pilgrimage. The crowning consummation of the cross is that it points from what is to what lies beyond. It invites us to interpret the beginning, the end, and the course of our lives against the background of a divine eternity.

Yet how much of our effort is dedicated to putting the fact of death out of mind. Modern man will accept the fact of birth as an intrusion of the divine, for every parent who has held in his arms a new born infant fresh from the hands of God feels humble before the mystery of creation which has been repeated once more. We find no difficulty in consenting to the divinity which surrounds birth but we find great difficulty in believing that divinity surrounds death. Death is the ultimate enemy. It represents the termination of our hopes, the cancellation of our efforts, and, we feel, the denial of our values. Therefore, we shun it; we avoid it; we refuse to think about it. A college professor reported that 50% of his students would prefer not to know that they were going to die should they contract an incurable disease. Wise doctors and sympathetic friends understand that a patient's recovery sometimes depends upon his not knowing all of the facts of his condition. But these modern students were afflicted with no fatal illness. They were self-confident college students who would probably have boasted in any other connection of their ability to take their facts raw. Yet here in the presence of the ultimate, ineradicable fact of death, 50% of them declared that they preferred not to know about it. Many people try to solve this basic problem by extending the distance between Bethlehem and Calvary, by removing Calvary, if possible, entirely from the realm of human experience. Do not the insurance reports testify with pride to the increased life span? Are not the ardent and arduous labors of doctors and scientists dedicated to increasing life expectancy?

To increase the period of one's usefulness is a good thing. But the mere extension of the time of living is not necessarily good. In the Old Testament there is recorded the brief account of a man who was successful in living 969 years. All we know of this man is that single fact. The scripture relates laconically that Methuselah lived to be 969 years old and he died. His life had a single dimension—length. In his experience there was no vertical beam pointing upward from the earth beneath to divinity above. There was no lateral beam pointing outward to a life of service on behalf of his fellow man. Without a vertical or lateral loyalty there was no indication of the presence of the cross in his experience. He had apparently extended the distance between Bethlehem and Calvary to a considerable length but his life was without breadth or height. Physical length cannot compensate for the lack of spiritual depth. "All the days of Methuselah were 969 years: and he died." Methuselah was a vegetable.

THE ESCAPIST ATTITUDE

Modern man has developed still another device for postponing an answer to this unescapable problem. He feels that if he can fill up his experience with enough bright and noisy activity during the course of his pilgrimage from Bethlehem to Calvary, the perception of the end will be dulled, and if this ostrich philosophy serves him well he will be able to postpone a consideration of the inescapable fact for the whole of his natural life. This escapist attitude comes to light in peculiar places. Here for example is an advertisement which appeared in the magazine of a vacation resort, "Insurance staticians show the average span of life is only 60 years. If you are 30 you have 30 years left—you will sleep half that time; that leaves only 15 years—you will work a third of each day; that leaves only 10 years—you'll be sick about a month of the year; that leaves only 8 or 9 years—barring accidents you haven't long to live—so to best enjoy these fleeting moments, visit your neighborhood theater regularly!" Despite the advertised benefits of an occasional visit to the neighborhood theater, not even the writer of this advertisement would contend that the practice will give us the answer to our ultimate problems.

In an excellent study made by Fortune magazine on "The Christian Churches in the War," a writer

gave disturbing testimony on how far the escapist attitude has advanced among our people. He said, "Long before 1939, the nominally Protestant American people had all but lost touch with the absolutely stupendous interpretation of life and history that Christianity offers. Though people in general have nothing against truth, they did not believe that the truth would set them free. They were sure that money in the bank would set them free—free to travel, free to escape from disadvantages, free to exercise their talents and realize their desires. This freedom was highly advertised. Christianity appeared to have lost its relevance."

Our souls would be safer and our mental health more salutary if instead of postponing or avoiding the ultimate fact of death we faced it and thought it through. Anyone who thinks persistently about that fact will come out with a philosophy, and if he thinks profoundly he will find a religion. Until one has developed a philosophy or a religion he is poorly prepared to live, and he is unprepared to die.

DEATH SIMPLY A HORIZON

This is the point at which Christianity can help us. In the Christian philosophy the fact of death has not been abhorrent because it has not been regarded as ultimate. In Christian philosophy death is the doorway to a continued life. It is a horizon, and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. This was the truth which the women discovered when they came to the tomb on the first Easter Sunday searching for the body of the crucified Lord. They met there instead an angel who said to them, "He is not here; he is risen and he goeth before you into Galilee even as he himself said." Jesus never accepted the fact of death as ultimate: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it." Neither were his followers able to accept the fact of death as final. Those who knew him best had an intimate personal experience of the presence of his continuing spirit with them. "I am persuaded," said the apostle, "that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." In the divine eternity which surrounds all our days, the law of God is not the law of death but the law of life.

May Sinclair in her novel *The Tree of Heaven* provides an illuminating insight through the character of Frances, the mother of two children. The mother observes that the awful thing about your children is that they are always dying even while they remain alive. One day, she says, I looked and my only child Dorothy was dead and in her place was a strange big girl. Another day the child Michael was dead and in his place was a strange big boy. Like any normal mother she mourned the passing of each age because she recognized that it is impossible to bring back the unique loveliness of the two year old, the four year old, or the seven year old; yet, says the author, she knew that all this dying was to give place to a more wonderful and strange life. So the infant dies making place for the child, and he dies making place for the youth in order that the full maturity of life may be reached.

NATURE FAVORS LIFE

We need to remember that the law of all nature is the law of life, the law of renewal and recovery. Recently there was sold in the state of California a giant Sequoia tree. A group of botanists was called in to write the history of this tree. Their history pointed out that this tree was a seedling in the year 271 B. C., that 516 years later it was damaged by a forest fire, and nature had immediately set to work to repair that damage by folding layers of living tissue over the scar. Within a century the wound was healed. In later centuries, however, two other forest fires had left scars, the first of which was entirely healed at the time of cutting and the second of which was a tremendous scar 18 feet wide and 30 feet high. But, said the scientists, had nature been given a chance, even that wound would have been entirely healed. The predominant fact in nature is not death but life.

Again, consider what a miraculous transformation of meaning has taken place in history with respect to the cross. In the first instance this was a dreadful instrument of torture and death. But within three days of the time of Calvary the disciples were beginning to think in other terms about the cross. They had arrived at the conviction that God's last word is not the word of death but the word of life. Within a few years Paul was writing, "The offense of the cross has ceased," and he prayed, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." By the 4th century Christians were reciting everywhere their familiar slogan *In hoc signo vinces, "In this sign thou shalt conquer."* As a matter of actual record, the cross has changed in human history from a symbol of death upon a hill to a symbol of hope upon our altars and Christians are singing everywhere:

> In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time.

The Christian does not share the opinion that the pilgrimage from Bethlehem to Calvary is a path of pain which must be shunned, avoided, or covered up with distracting activity. The Christian does not share the opinion that Calvary and the cross upon it are God's last words to man. He recalls that Good Friday was followed by Easter Sunday; that God's universal law is not the law of death but the law of renewal, recovery, and life. In the presence of the cross the Christian knows that,

> Behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God within the shadow
> keeping watch above his own.

"Jesus gave the world its highest hope for man. "You are to be perfect," he said. Perfect! You uncouth fishermen, you weary builders, you fretful mothers, you who are frustrated, ill-tempered, heavy-laden! You can be heroes!"—V. A. K.

Reality Breaks Through

By R. P. MARSHALL

JOHN, the apostle, writing to his friends in his first letter, has an intimate word which J. B. Phillips makes even more touching in his translation: "Oh, dear children of mine . . . have you realized it? Here and now we *are* God's children! We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that, if reality were to break through, we should reflect his likeness."

"If reality should break through!" What a thought! Can you see the picture? Here is the Christian, living in an evil world, surrounded by temptation, and exposed to the subtle influence of a false philosophy which says that there is only one world—the one which lies about us, open to the eyes of our physical being. Yet the Christian knows that above, about, and beneath him there is another world, a world of reality which he can only perceive with the eyes of faith. This is the true and living reality which some day will break through into our lives.

A contemporary writer recently pictured modern man as being surrounded by the watching eyes of the lower animals who are waiting, waiting until he should abdicate his place of leadership. The writer gave a disquieting story of how, in turn, one animal after another has ruled the earth, only to fall prey to the waiting ones. The religious interpreter will find difficulty in believing such a terrible picture, for it leaves God out of account and sees man as only one in a succession of animal rulers. Nevertheless, it would be well for us to hold that faint and blurred scene a bit closer to our eyes that it may bring us another thought. I do not believe that man is in danger of abdicating his throne in favor of the chipmunks or the monkeys. I cannot believe that and at the same time believe the words of the Bible which speaks of man's infinite worth and his high destiny as the one who is made a little lower than God.

But there is another sense in which we are surrounded, surrounded by a cloud of unseen helpers, a host of watchers from the spirit world—the world of reality. When reality does break through we will see God and what life really is.

A few days ago the inhabitants of a little town in Pennsylvania not so far from my home were astonished to see an object described as a flying disc come hurtling to the ground in flames. When the fire was out, the curious people surrounded the object and began to speculate upon its origin. The military authorities were called in and quickly took charge. To this moment no one knows what it was, but the vivid imagination of some has suggested that it might be a mysterious caller from another world, a product of the genius of the Martians, or a mysterious weapon sent from a hostile nation. But, whatever it is, one thing is certain, that in this peculiar object we have proof that some sort of reality, formerly unknown, has broken through the barrier of secrecy and mystery.

The world is full of mystery and the advance of science has only made us more conscious of the vast unknown.

I

Reality does break through. St. John was right as he wrote to his friends: "We don't know what we will become in the future. We only know that if reality were to break through, we could reflect God's likeness." The full realization of our heritage awaits the final consummation of God's plan for us, but, meanwhile, the door is open a little way into the world of reality, and we can catch, for a moment, fleeting glimpses of the vast unknown.

One day a little man was hurrying down the dusty road to Damascus. Armed with authority from the chief religious leaders, he was bent on destroying the new sect which had arisen in Jerusalem and was now spreading to the outlying districts. Like all religious zealots, Paul was certain that he was doing God's will. He was following his conscience, as he thought, and though his natural instincts of kindliness protested against his mission, yet he sternly repressed any feelings of sympathy for these misguided followers of the Nazarene. He argued with himself as he went along. Surely he was right in what he was doing, yet the face of the murdered Stephen kept coming before him. If only he could know for certain! And then reality broke through, and Saul, the persecutor of the Christians, heard the voice of Jesus whom he had never seen, speaking to him, and I think he got a glimpse of the face of him who had died on the cross. It was too much, and, as the eyes of faith were opened, the physical power of sight was lost and Saul became blind. From that day Saul, the great zealot, named for Israel's famous king, lost all of his pretensions to worldly greatness and became a new man, Paul, "the little," a humble follower of the Nazarene. Reality had broken through!

II

The illusion of secularism is today being dissipated by the reality of the Christian faith. Where once we were told that all man needed to do was to gradually improve until he had reached perfection, we are now hearing philosophers and scientists agree that man is not able to pull himself up out of the mire of sin and frustration by his own bootstraps. For example, science is making it possible for us to make more money by working fewer hours, to live twenty years longer than our great-grandfathers, to produce a hundred times as much with less effort, to span the globe in a few hours, or to see and hear what goes on in the farthest corners of the

earth in the space of a few moments. We know more than ever, we read more books and magazines than ever before, and the world of human interests is open to our minds. Yet what has happened? In an age when it is possible to send a message to almost all of the inhabitants of the civilized world in a moment, we have nothing to say!

Radio is one of the great inventions of the age, but how is it being used? Is it a force for good or evil? In isolated instances it is bringing to us a new world of good music and inspiration, but for every minute of such programs there are hours of deadly boredom, or definitely injurious propaganda. Someone pictured a future super-state in which all the people are required to keep their radios tuned in at all times, to hear the hypnotic voice of the dictator. But that is not all, for in each room in every home or office building are two-way television sets, so that at no time are the people free from espionage. Control stations in every city constantly monitor the images received from these sets and no one knows when he will be observed and heard by the secret police. There is no freedom of action, or even thought, for the sensitive television camera seems to pick up their inner emotions as mirrored on their faces. That is the nightmare which some day might become a reality!

Is this too fantastic? Perhaps. But let us not forget that even today we have the power to mold public opinion to an extent hitherto undreamed of. "What hath God wrought!" was the message sent over the first telegraph. Perhaps we may some day add a final message: "What hath man destroyed!" By his mastery of the art of communication man has made it possible to seal his own doom.

A few years ago, with Hiroshimo and Nagasaki fresh in their minds, a group of scientists sought to awaken the world to the danger of atomic warfare. But their voice went unheeded, and today we debate the killing qualities of bombs versus germs, and look on unmoved as science moves into the realm of total destruction.

III

The illusion of secularism is firmly entrenched in our thinking today, but over against it is the realism of the Christian faith. The only reality in this world is that given to us by our faith. Some day that reality will break through!

What does Jesus say to our world today? His message is unchanging, for it is based upon the only reality in the universe. It sees man as he is, made in the image of God, yet fallen from his high estate. It sees him as a sinner, yet capable of seeking and obtaining forgiveness, a prodigal who can still come back home.

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" cried Paul, as he looked upon himself and all mankind for a moment with the pure eyes of enlightenment. Reality broke through in that moment, and cut through the clouds of self-praise and self-complacency. He saw himself as a sinner, despite his best efforts. But he did not stop there. He went on to say, in the words of Phillips' translation, "I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

The Beloved Apostle, writing in his cave on the isle of Patmos, left as his final message the book that we call Revelation. It is a mystical and symbolic picture of the final consummation of the age, when reality should at last break through. In its oriental imagery we find much to puzzle us, but there is one sentence which is transparently clear. In it he speaks of the time when the kingdoms of the world shall have become the Kingdoms of Christ. Only then will we find the beatitude which we seek. Yet, in his letter, from which we have quoted, he gives us this consolation, "O dear children of mine, have you realized it? Here and now we are God's children." Here and now! That is the answer to the cry of modern man, burdened by neuroses and fears, troubled by the failing of dreams and the falling bastions of human hopes.

We are God's children and that is enough. We don't know what we will become. We don't know what will happen to this world, but here and now we are his own. If that is so, then there are certain truths that must inevitably follow. One is that we shall successfully strive against sin, for the tug of God's goodness continues to break through to human hearts. Another truth is that we shall successfully strive against death, for the unseen reality of what we are is as divine and eternal as God himself.

The Stone at the Door

By CLAIR M. COOK

THE WOMEN who came to the garden very early in the morning of that momentous day nineteen centuries ago, bearing fragrant spices to sweeten the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and honor for the last time their beloved friend and leader, were troubled by a very practical question. It is a question which has echoed down through the corridors of time ever since, and rolls cavernously about the hollow places of our own civilization. It is a question which was suddenly and unbelievably answered for them by that event which calls forth today the glad alleluias; answered for them by the discovery that the bonds of death were burst asunder, the seal of the tomb was broken, and the Master of all was come forth to walk down the ages with them and with all mankind.

But as Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, approached the garden, they did not know these things. They were filled with the sadness, and were intent upon the purpose which had brought them here: to enter in to him for the last anointing

in his burial place. As they approached, full of grief and sorrow, they faced the practical reality of an obstacle. They were saying among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

The stone at the door barred their way. They wanted to go in unto the Christ, but they could approach him only after the stone at the door was rolled away.

"And when they looked, they saw that the stone *was* rolled away." That was the first intimation that the women or the world had of the fact that the rock-hewn tomb could not enclose the Christ. "He is not here," they were told. "He is risen." "They trembled and were amazed;" "and they went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre." They could not believe it; they were afraid. Some power had been there, had rolled the stone away, had vanquished death in victory. It was Easter dawn, the first day of the week, and Jesus was risen from the tomb. So, the followers of Jesus became the followers of the Christ; the first day of the week became the Christian sabbath; and the coming of spring with its newness of life in bursting bud and blossom brings each year another Easter with its glorious message to the world. The stone was rolled away from the door, and Christ's spirit was gone forth throughout the earth.

* * *

But as the world looks upon Easter again each year, it is still in the position of the women who were on their way to the tomb. We, too, must make our pilgrimage to find him, to do homage at his resting place. Perhaps he will come to us as he did to Mary Magdalene who mistook his identity, "supposing him to be the gardener." We too may find him in unexpected guise; but also like Mary, we may find him only because we have entered the garden in search of him. But, he could come to her, and he can come to the world on this Easter day, only when the stone is rolled away from the door.

There are many stones at many doors, entombing the spirit of the Christ; for even as without him we can do nothing, without us he can do nothing. We are his hands and feet; we are, as the church has always proclaimed itself to be, the body of Christ on earth. If our churches are to be his churches, we must roll the great stones from their doors; if our nations are to be his nations, we must ask the question which the women asked one another, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?"; and if our hearts are to be his, the stones which block his entrance there must be removed.

Sometimes it seems that the stones at the door of international relations are so big that no force can possibly roll them away. We help bring forth a League of Nations, then leave it in impotence partly for lack of our cooperation; we sealed the door upon its tomb, and went away without much sorrow. We greedily sold scrap iron by the ship-load to Japan, only to pick it out of the bodies of our men in the form of shrapnel a few years later. We stood idly by as spectators while Hitler broke the treaties we acknowledged and re-armed his growing might, only to oppose him with all our sinews of war in due time. We gave leadership to the formation of the world's greatest international hope, the United Nations, and then by-passed its channels with aid to Greece and Turkey and through the signing of an Atlantic Pact without its offices. We have not only failed to roll away the stone from the door of permanent international harmony, but too often we have helped to seal it up and place a guard before it so that the spirit of the Christ may not arise to enter into our garden.

There are still many stones before this door, and they are very great: the threat of the atom bomb; the selfishness of nations who will not put collective good above individual interest; the old imperialism of colonial desires and international intrigue; the selfishness of the veto power in the United Nations; the walls of tariffs and immigration quotas which divide and subdivide God's children; the treatment of refugees and stateless persons; how many are the stones at the door of international relations! It is well on Easter morn to look at one another and say with some of the deep concern of those women, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre?"

> "One message through the ages has been hurled:
> His love is hope and light for all the world."

The poet knows the answer; true poets have a knack of finding out the answers and couching them in phrases that ring with truth and insight. "For all the world" his love is hope and light. But he can not arise from "the blinding darkness of the tomb" until the stone at the door is rolled away. He can not permeate the dark strifesome areas of the nations' dealings with one another save in the persons of the Nations' leaders. The love of Christ which rolled away the stone at Easter in Joseph's garden must be embodied in persons —in Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson, in Mr. Stalin and Mr. Molotov, in Nehru of India and Chaim Weizmann of Israeli, in men of power in seats of government. It is as true in the dealings of representatives of nations as it is in the dealings of individuals with each other that *his love,* as shown in us, is the hope and light of all the world. The stone at the door, restraining the spirit of Christ from entering into all phases of international relations, can be rolled away. "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?" Who rolled away the stone for the women? It was the power of love in Christ; and his love today can roll away the stone which is at the door of the world.

* * *

There are stones at the doors of our churches, too— great and awkward stones blocking the entrance of many people. One such stone is named Hypocrisy. The pillar of the church who prayed as loudly as any Pharisee and then went forth to cheat the boy who was working for him of a hundred dollars in wages, and beat his farm animals, was such a stone at the door. Looking upon him, there were people in that community who said, "If that is being a church member, I will never be one."

Or in another church, the stone at the door may be petty jealousy. Even among the disciples of Jesus himself there was contention as to who should be first in the kingdom; and among today's disciples in the churches are to be found some of the followers of James and John. Each time they take offense at one another for taking too many prerogatives in leadership of women's groups or the Sunday school or any other church activity; each time some petty jealousy mars the relationship of members to one another or to the church, they are rolling up another stone to the door to keep outside the lookers-on who say, "If that is Christianity, count me out." For the stone is very great.

And on Easter Sunday we are inevitably reminded that we are placing stones at the door of the church when we do not fulfill our vows to attend and to support with our gifts, our prayers, and our presence, the institution which bears the name of Christ. And how can the stone be rolled away from the door of the church save by the united efforts of all who call upon the name of its founder and claim his spirit!

* * *

But the largest and heaviest stone before the door of our Protestant communions is that great block called Denominationalism, which is to Christendom what national sovereignty is to the political world. But, slowly this stone also is moving aside. We have been learning, at least in the larger planning of Christ's work, what we have not always sought in our churches at the local level—the fellowship and cooperation of common effort in his common cause. Wherever the churches have pulled aside in selfish, exclusive claims to be the one and only true preservers of the faith, they have rolled up weighty stones before the door to the place where Christ's spirit lies. It is good to know that the Congregational-Christian Church is uniting with the Evangelical-Reformed, to make one out of four former denominations; it is good to know that an Episcopal bishop and a Methodist bishop have held joint services of confirmation in the two forms of our one faith; it is good to know that the World Council of Churches unites the efforts of 152 churches from fifty countries of the world. Christ's love in us is rolling aside that stone today.

* * *

But you and I, as well as nations and churches, must answer for ourselves the question of the women, must solve the problem of rolling away the stone from our own lives. For

> ". . . as the dawn of Easter fills the skies,
> We, too, with him in spirit must arise,
> For underneath us in the earth
> There is a faithful promise of rebirth."

Is there a stone at the door of your heart today? Is there anything which gives it a heavy, leaden, stone-filled hardness?

> "If there's a stone against your heart today,
> Look up to him and it will roll away."

Have you an unforgiven wrong against a fellow man? Then go and ask his pardon, and roll away the stone from the door of your heart. Is there a dislike, a jealousy, a hatred gnawing at your soul? Then consult with him who taught love of enemies and prayer for those who despitefully use you. Is there an evil habit chaining you relentlessly, one which you would like to break but cannot overcome? Then look to him who rolled away the stone from the tomb with his message of love and work for others; for thought of others and of him can help to overcome. "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Who, indeed? Is not the answer obvious?

It is the power of love which breaks forth from the tomb on the bright Easter dawn, the power of love which breaks through the gloom of man's stony sealed-up hearts as well. That is the meaning of the risen Christ; he has pushed aside the stone from the door and is free in the world to exercise his spirit for all time. If we but set out earnestly for the garden with devotion and love, seeking him out with our spices, we will not need to worry about the stone at the door; for we will only look and see that the stone is rolled away, even though it be very great.

Who will roll away the stone? He will, himself. He will roll away the stone at the door of the nations, at the door of the churches, and at the door of your heart.

Pastoral Prayer

By THOMAS S. VERNON

O THOU who appearest to the philosopher as Truth, to the saint as Goodness, to the poet as Beauty, to the mystic as Love and Peace, to the prophet as Duty; who appearest to the materialist as a Superstition, and to the skeptic as an Enigma; we acknowledge before Thee that there is no creed, no definition that can contain Thee. All the fruits of human wisdom and insight, gathered through the ages, cannot probe the depths of Thy nature and being, nor answer all the questions we would ask.

Indeed, we must confess that everything we pretend to know is shrouded in mystery. We know not the meaning of birth or death, nor the reason for the brief life that occurs between. We cannot say what consciousness is, nor how we came to have it. The smallest thing confronts us with unanswerable questions—a snowflake, a blade of grass, an insect, a grain of sand.

At times it seems to us that the most baffling of all mysteries is that of evil and suffering. Especially when we ourselves come face to face with one of life's aimless misfortunes, do we grope for some reasonable answer that will cushion the shock of calamity.

Sometimes we turn to Thee with the voice of complaining, and cry, "If Thou art a God of justice and love, why dost Thou inflict such torment? Why do our prayers not avail to deliver us? What have we done to deserve such pitiless chastisement?

At such times, O God, help us to remember that religion, when it has spoken truly and nobly, has never advertised itself as a way of escaping the vicissitudes of life, that we were not called to Thy service to avoid our share of human ills, but to advance the cause of Thy Kingdom. As followers of Jesus, we are asked to be seekers, not of prosperity, but of goodness.

Give us the clear-sighted courage, O God, to accept tragedy as a fact. These things must be, though it is not Thy will. Help us to see, that faith in Thee, while not shielding us from adversity, does give us the strength to endure it, and eventually to triumph over it, as Christ triumphed over the cross. Help us attain that depth of faith whereby we may have an inner peace that cannot be destroyed.

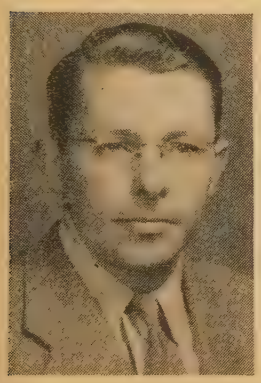
Above all, help us to serve unwaveringly the cause of Thy Kingdom, that we may contribute to the making of a better world, hastening the day when Thy loving and beneficent will shall have full sway, unhindered by the ignorance and selfishness of man. Amen.

The Furnished Room*

By RAYMOND E. BALCOMB

. . . And he will show you a large upper room furnished . . ." —Mark 14:15

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the upper room was furnished. Our text says so. But furnished with what? Certainly with a medium-sized table, reclining couches, and a few other pieces. But is that all? No! Reflection on the meaning of that meeting will remind us that the upper room was furnished with something more than a few sticks of furniture. And it is toward two or three of these intangibles that I would like to direct our attention tonight. After all, this was the visible beginning of the Christian fellowship that became the Church. Surely there was something more than lumber in that furnished room!



For one thing, *the room was furnished with a great tradition.* The hopes and fears of all the years of Israel's history were symbolized in the Feast of the Passover. In American terms this feast was a sort of Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Day rolled into one. It was the solemn yet joyous remembrance of how the Israelites "passed over" from bondage to freedom under the intrepid Moses; of how God guided them forty years in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land. Its unleavened bread recalled the manna; its cup, the blood of the faithful upon their doors that the dark angel might "pass over" them in bringing retribution upon Egypt. Every loyal Jew longed to be in the Holy City that night to share in and carry on this great tradition.

I

Furthermore, when Jesus recalled to his disciple's minds the majestic ideals of Israel's most sensitive prophet, Jeremiah, who first spoke of the "new covenant" written on the hearts of men rather than on tablets of stone, then the tradition became even richer. All that was highest and noblest of the profoundest religious system of the ancient world furnished that upper room.

Our lives, too, are furnished with a great tradition. For sheer geographical grasp and continuity of tradition there has never been anything like Christianity. Judaism is older, but not half so virile; Hinduism is perhaps older and perhaps embraces a greater number of persons, but it has scarcely lifted one continent, to say nothing of a world, to a higher plane of life. There is nothing comparable to the procession of Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther in all the history of mankind. It is in the finest tradition that we share.

There is, to be sure, a danger in tradition. It was the traditionalists who crucified Jesus. It is the traditionalist who frequently stands in the way of progress. We must be alert to keep our great tradition from becoming a stagnant morass.

At a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous a man was relating his experience with alcohol. He told how at one time he had wanted to buy a fine watch. It was both a stop watch and a chronometer; it showed the phases of the moon and the day of the month. "In fact," he remarked, "all it lacked was hot and cold running water." He knew that a watch like that could never be fixed by an ordinary jeweler. It would have to be taken back to its maker. "Then one day," he said, "it came to me that my life was a very complicated affair like that watch. It had broken down. It was out of order. I decided that my only chance was to take it back to its Maker."

That's it, isn't it? Our great tradition will only be kept in working order so long as we take it back to its originator for regular checking. In the words of the justly famous prayer, when we compare the Church with all human institutions we rejoice, for there is none like her; but when we judge her by the mind of her master we bow in contrition.

II

In the second place, *the upper room was furnished with a dark cloud.* Before the fellowship meal was over everyone was aware that something was wrong; more

*A communion meditation for Maundy Thursday.

than one had surmised that treason was in the air, and we read that "they began to be sorrowful."

It is surely not stretching the parallel to say that our time, too, is furnished with a dark cloud. Who knows! the very betrayal of human life may now be going on among those generals and admirals who prepare for atomic war seemingly as unconcerned as children playing with matches. The men who created and tested the bomb say there is no defense, that radiation once started inevitably will attack every living thing on the globe, and yet we talk of defense pacts and re-arming Europe! There is a dark cloud over our lives; no question about it.

Turn to our economic situation. Is the long-feared recession here? Or has wild armament-spending temporarily delayed the inevitable? And will the malady only be aggravated by postponement? There is a cloud over every life in the U.S.A.

Or consider our common concern, Christianity. One of America's foremost church historians is Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale. In his latest book he says, "The very existence of Christianity seems threatened. Seldom if ever has the menace to Christianity been so grave as in the present century . . . One . . . might come to the conclusion that Christianity has reached the peak of its career and is irretrievably declining as a vital force in the life of mankind." (*Christian Outlook,* p. 20.)

One could go on! Our time is furnished with a dark cloud, all right.

III

But hold on! What else is the upper room furnished with? *It is furnished with a tremendous promise.* The promise of the Kingdom of God; the promise that wherever one man or two or a dozen let him rule their lives, there is his kingdom; the promise that we can be in his kingdom *now.* That seems to be the mission and message of Jesus, and we are partakers of that tremendous promise.

During the war a patrol plane made a forced landing in the ocean, its two occupants escaping safely to a nearby coral reef. Looking about, they discovered that there was not a bit of vegetation on the tiny island, only a rough wooden cross made from two heavy pieces of ship's timber. It marked the lonely grave of some long-forgotten sailor. Three days passed without a sign of a rescue ship or plane. They could barely discern an island some twenty miles away that had vegetation, and hence, they reasoned, food and water. They decided to swim for it. "But," said one, "we'll never be able to make that long swim without something to support us. Let's take down that cross and use it." "That would be sure to bring us bad luck," said the other; "you can't tear a cross down like that. It would be sacrilegious." So, they argued until finally the first one said, "I don't know much about religion, but I heard a chaplain say once that Jesus turned his cross into a plus sign; crucifixion plus faith equalled victory. Why can't we make a plus sign out of this cross and use it to save ourselves?" That did it. The next morning they put the cross in the water and it kept them afloat during the long swim to food, water, and rescue.

That's what the great promise is. God can use even the cross in advancing his kingdom. Defeat can be turned into victory.

IV

There is one more thing to say about the furnished room. *It holds the key to eternity as well as time.* Beyond its great tradition, beyond the dark cloud of treason, its tremendous promise illumines the deathless hope of life eternal. Hear the parable of the ship which was found in the wallet of a soldier. "I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she is only a ribbon of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, 'There! She's gone!' Gone? Gone where? Gone from my sight; that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her, and just at the moment when someone at my side says, 'There! She's gone!' there are other voices ready to take up the glad shout, 'There! She comes!' And that is dying." So is it with our lives as with those who at the Passover in the furnished room; we rejoice in a hope big with immortality and we face the future undismayed.

No Sugar!

A Sermon for Children by T. Moore Atkinson

ONE summer in the town where I lived, the young men played a donkey baseball game. It was uproariously funny for everyone who saw it. It worked like this: Instead of walking, each player was given a small donkey to ride in the game. Sometimes the donkeys would go where the players wanted them to go, and sometimes they wouldn't. Often they got a mean streak and would buck and pitch till they threw the riders off. Imagine the riot of fun for everyone.

Now, after watching this game for a while we began to notice that when the donkey handlers wanted a certain donkey to act nice and go where guided, just before the rider got in the saddle the handler would slip a lump of sugar to the little animal. Then the sly beast would be docile and obedient. But sometimes, for fun, the handler would not want the donkey to be good for certain players. Then he would "forget" the sugar the donkey expected. And would that donkey buck and bite and tear around in a tantrum when play began! He'd do anything except what the rider wanted him to do.

As we thought about it afterward, we began to say, now isn't that exactly like many people we know! Especially some very young people who haven't learned life very well yet! If you keep on giving them sugar,

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everything is fine. They do pretty much what they ought to do. But if you forget the sugar, or if there isn't any more sugar, immediately they begin to cut up and start a great row. They refuse to do any of the important things you want them to do. Just like the mean, tough donkeys who wouldn't play unless they got sugar.

Yes, even in fun these people won't "play the game" unless they are constantly given sugar. They buck, sulk, whine and maybe go into a tantrum of rage which makes them look very ridiculous ineed. For those donkeys were ridiculous. They didn't play the game very well. People sometimes refuse to go to school unless they are paid for going, or do some little task unless they get something for it. Now that might be all right, if men were just donkeys. To act meanly. But people, we think, ought to have better manners and brains than a donkey.

Don't be a donkey! If you happen to get sugar once in a while, that's fine. But if the sugar fails, or if you are not given any, go right on anyway and play the game. Do the things that need to be done. And plug for your team, whatever it is. Donkeys sulk. Real people play up.

The New Testament tells the story of a man who must have been much like one of those donkeys. We know very little about him, but his name was Demas. The Apostle Paul speaks very tenderly about Demas in two or three places and calls him a loved fellow-worker. But later he says this very sad thing, "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world and went away." We suspect that what Paul really is saying, if put in other words, is that Demas wanted some "sugar" to make him go on working. Nobody gave him the sugar, so he quit! He wouldn't play any more. And we never hear of Demas again.

You see, this world is not run on the "lump of sugar" plan. A real man and a true woman go forward and do the things that ought to be done, sugar or no sugar, reward or no reward. That's the way the world travels. And it is good that it is that way. Sugar! that's sissy! Playing the game, doing the job—that's where nobility comes in. Let's not be a donkey today! Play the game!

The Peril of an Inadequate Religion

By ELDEN H. MILLS*

. . . The chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe him.
Matthew 27:41, 42

SOME YEARS AGO, at a Sunday afternoon Men's Conference held weekly at the Bedford Branch "Y" in Brooklyn, S. Parkes Cadman, following his afternoon address, was answering the questions which were fired at him in the question and answer period.

Some of those extempore answers were jewels, combining profound learning, rich personality, spiritual depth, and magnificent prose. That afternoon the replies had been serious, and then came this question, terse and brief: "Dr. Cadman, do the dead live?" Like the snap of a pistol Dr. Cadman retorted, "They certainly do; if you don't believe it, come down to my church and have a look at some of my deacons." Unfortunately, far too many people in the church are amazingly moribund in soul, if not already defunct. I wonder if most non-religious people do not have the picture that religion is lifeless, that it is something to be gloomy about, something pallid and musty. Whenever I see a sombre, gloomy minister, as though his religion had dyspepsia, I want to take him and his religion to the races. The word gospel means *good news*. Jesus was as joyous a man as ever lived; "joy" and "abundant life" were ever on his lips. That should not surprise us, for those who are capable of great suffering are capable of great joy; joy and pain have the same root. But a gloomy religion! there is something vastly inadequate about that.

BEING SLIGHTLY RELIGIOUS

I want to talk with you about the peril of an inadequate religion. That may strike us rather violently, for at best our religion is little enough. None of us has arrived. The little that has been our experience, however, we would like to believe to be an asset, rather than to have it impugned as a peril. But there is a sense in which religion is always a perilous thing, even and especially at its highest. Yet that does not mean it is gloomy. Many people love the peril of mountain climbing, the risk of battle, the adventure of flying. Observe how it drove the man who was closest to God to a cross-crowned death. There is a bronze plaque at Hartford Theological Seminary in memory of one of its finest students, a graduate who went many years ago to Turkey, and the inscription reads, "Killed by those he had come to serve." Our Pilgrim Fathers braved an unknown and fearful ocean for weeks in a vessel you would not dare sail across Long Island Sound, to an unknown land filled with rocks, forests, rugged winters, and Indians, because they had a religious drive within them which could not be satisfied in their native land. Religion at its best is a perilous thing, always was and always will be.

*Elden H. Mills is pastor of The First Church of Christ (Congregational) in West Hartford, Connecticut—the third in the series of Twelve Great Churches of America being studied by the editors of *The Christian Century*.

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But an *inadequate* religion is also a peril, a deadly peril. I am not thinking this morning of those of you who are eagerly searching, trying to emerge from a confusion and an insecurity which the vicissitudes of experience have made your peculiar problem and which the complexity and incongruities of the times have made more severe, who recognize the frailties of your own faith but are sincerely seeking to strengthen that faith. Rather I am thinking of those who easily become satisfied with some static spiritual condition, who have an inadequate religious philosophy and do not know it or do not care. No doubt it was people like these Pope had in mind when he wrote

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
> And drinking largely sobers us again."

To drink quickly a little from the brook Hippocrene that flowed down Mt. Olympus was deadly. One must drink deeply of the poetic enthusiam which flowed from Apollo, lest the slight inspiration of the Muses mean merely befuddlement.

THE PERIL OF UNFAIR EVIDENCE

At the crucifixion, it was the chief priests, with the scribes and elders—the best religious people of the hour—who jibed: "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the Christ, let him come down from the cross and we will believe him." Not only done to death by the leaders of his own religion, he was mocked and spit upon by them. And then, having accomplished their bloody deed, while looking on to jeer, these best religious people went the limit of hypocrisy by flinging out the lie that they would believe in him if he came down from the cross, professing to be open-minded if their suggested text were demonstrated with success, while the very context was alive with the inference that they knew he did not have the power to come down. So it is that we crucify the Lord of life over again because the religion which has solidified in us is inadequate. That makes the Church of Christ not a club of saints but "a society of sinners," who, lest we crucify him contemporaneously, must summon ourselves to self-examination and critical alertness so that the religion we have does not become a peril.

Perhaps the bystanders who heard the jibe of those who paraded about the cross—"He saved others; himself he cannot save"—thought it a good one and laughed about it. But no! it is true; true of him who drinks deep. I am thinking of our doctor who, through the war years, working from early to late in saving others, was not saving himself. Of course the Lord could not come down from the cross; in saving others he could not save himself. Christ's enemies thought they made a jibe which proved something about him. It did, but the opposite of what they thought. What religion they had was a peril.

The fact that the remark is hackneyed makes it no less true, that the greatest hazard to Christianity today is not irreligion but poor religion, not atheism but a thin and emasculated faith. I wonder sometimes that our young people turn out to be as fine as they are. They go to schools where science is exact, where chemical experiments conducted without error come out with such accuracy that books can be printed as texts, accepted as universally true. In those same schools the teaching of religion is prohibited, which seems to say that the secular is true, the spiritual is insignificant. They see a world of nations saddled with a militarism which negates God's love. We have been guilty of presenting God as a problem to be solved, as something upon which a discussion group can bring some light. Too many of our people have the rather settled opinion that God is beyond the bounds of our knowing, but if somebody will give us "proof" we will believe in him. Active living faith that has made him so real to men and women in all ages, however, never has rested on "Come down and I'll believe," but rather in the midst of doubts making the thrust of faith: "I believe: I'll bet my life that what ought to be true is true; help thou mine unbelief."

When Eddie Rickenbacker first published his confession, I thought it was something that would thin out with the passing of time. Yet it stands upon secure ground. It was not an isolated instance, that of his being saved after many days in an open raft, attributing to that one instance the work of God. He has flirted with danger all his life. When a boy he was almost killed when thrown from a horse. In the first World War he had one wing shot off while over Germany and he flew back to France and safety on one wing, and a prayer. When he cracked up a few years ago, many bones broken, one eye out of its socket, the physicians gave him one look and, considering him beyond repair, gave attention to others. He has now connected his daring of life's worst and daring to live in spite of it all, to a god, hitherto unnamed, as the power all along he was trusting. That is different from putting God to the test in an isolated emergency. Jesus, tempted by the devil to fall from the temple (being God's Son, his angels must have charge over him), refused to put God to that kind of a test. Occasionally we hear of someone whose life has been irradiated (or embittered) because in an emergency he prayed, "O God, get me out of this and I'll serve you the rest of my life." Regardless of some few illustrations to the contrary, that is thin religion. It is putting God suddenly to the test and is a far cry from the trust that makes God adequate for every emergency. For *then,* if there is tragedy, there is no bitterness but rather stronger faith, a chastened heart, ampler service. We must not live ignoring him; then, suddenly confronted with the impossible—perhaps of our own doing—quickly pray, "Come down and I'll believe."

DON'T SIMPLY WORSHIP JESUS

Then again, there has been the easy way in which we have allowed ourselves to substitute a worship of Jesus for the following of Jesus. This began in Jesus' own day and he warned against it: "Woe unto them who say Lord, Lord, but do not the things I say." Histori-

cally the creeds have been so busy insisting that Jesus was divine that they have lifted him to the position of a deity to be worshipped, and forgotten he was a life to be practiced. It has been one of the subtile tragedies of Christian history that we have gotten rid of the drastic responsibilities which Jesus lays upon us by turning around and worshipping him. In his great sermon on that subject, Dr. Fosdick uses the illustration of Lincoln. No sooner was Lincoln shot than friends and enemies alike began to elevate the martyred president to an almost sacred height which no other American has ever held; and while doing that, the American government put into effect a policy toward the South which was the violent opposite of all he stood for and advocated. The way we got rid of Lincoln's policies was to worship Lincoln, the last thing in the world he would have wanted. "Suppose we were to say," says Dr. Sockman, " 'we are going to follow Jesus as precisely as possible, however it comes out,' what would happen? It would mean—well, we do not know just what it would mean. That is the point. Our Christian profession would become an adventure." Simply to worship Jesus; how alluring and how easy! But what a peril!

REDUCING FAITH TO FATALISM

Then too, a little religion may mean escape from reality. A cheap belief in God often has been used as a way out of life's hard challenge. A college senior came into my study to discuss a pressing personal problem. It was fraught with difficult decision, and the right thing to do was not apparent, although the future consequences of impending choices were obviously great. She had risen to leave, with her hand on the doorknob, when she said, "Well, I believe that what will happen was meant to happen, so I'll let it go at that." And I rose to say, "Take off your coat and sit right down again; this hard challenge cannot be escaped so easily." For God was involved in that conclusion. What that student said takes away our responsibility for war and makes the all-loving God despicably unethical. That sort of fatalism means that the bomb that fell in London, killing Dr. Weatherhead's friends, a man, wife, and three little girls, had their names on it and was meant to kill them. What kind of a God would do that?

What shall we say further? More, indeed. When one contemplates the many tangents and cults to which people fly in their confusion, one can only conclude that for many people a little religion often does harm. To be sure, the prevalence of religious cults indicates a sterility within the Christian Church. But the eagerness with which people seek surcease and some glimpse beyond the veil, by their visitation to spiritualist camps and various flimsy cults, shows a vast distrust of the long-view which essential Christianity has of the God who was in Christ. The naturalness of Jesus' faith in God and in the wholesomeness of life! his making of the workshop a sanctuary and the marketplace an avenue to God! his faith in the heavenliness of nature's beauty and the divinity in little children!

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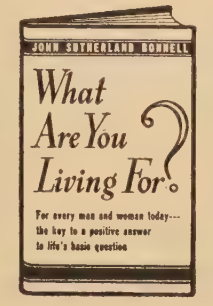
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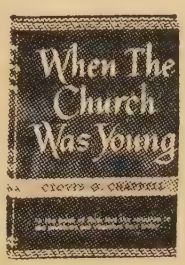

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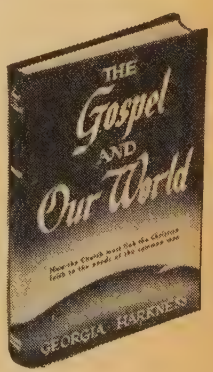

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> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
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Unpublished Sermons

ALAN WALKER, pastor of the Methodist Church of Australiasia, has a challenging sermon based on the incident of Christ going to Jerusalem. When Christ entered Jerusalem, it was Christianity entering the affairs of civilization. For, Jerusalem, like all cities, was a centre of civilization.

Christ's Challenge to Civilization

It was towards this city that Jesus set his face after two year's ministry in quiet, pastoral Galilee. Deliberately he moved from the circumference of his civilization to its centre. Deliberately he placed his Gospel amid the traffic of men, at the heart of society. It was because he dared challenge Jerusalem that he died.

One of the facts which is beginning to emerge in our day is that Jesus is again riding toward Jerusalem. For many years the Christian Church has been concerned with what might be called *Galilee affairs*. It has been absorbed in doctrine and the problems of its own inner life. It has spoken much of personal piety and rightly emphasized the relationship between the individual and God. But now, having gained new strength and assurance, it is sallying forth in a new challenge to our civilization.

There has always been a strange and dangerous trend in man's thinking upon religion. It is that religion belongs to the simpler and more personal aspects of life and should not interfere in certain fields of human activity.

Yet, in taking this course we are playing the very game those most opposed to Christian values want us to play. Dr. Goebbels defined the role of religion, as he saw it, in his Christmas broadcast of 1938: "A Church dabbling in politics should take note that their only task is to prepare for the world hereafter."

One of the impressive facts about England is the situation of the churches and the cathedrals. At the very centre of the so-called "city" of London, the commercial heart of the Empire, stands St. Paul's Cathedral. Within the very shadow of Parliament House is mighty Westminster Abbey. Amid the Law Courts can be found the tiny Temple Church. Attached to each of the colleges which make up the universities of Oxford and Cambridge are the college churches and chapels. That is the place of religion—at the crossroads, amid the traffic, at the centre of civilization. It is in every field of human activity that the Lordship of Christ must be declared.

As part of our division of life into two parts we often carry our thought a step further and say quite definitely that Christian standards cannot be applied to the wider fields of human affairs.

This claim that Galilean standards must be changed, even contradicted, in Jerusalem has had its part in the tragic moral collapse of our western civilization. In our hearts we have doubted whether pity and compassion and integrity and love can be applied to larger social issues. We have argued that a disinterested person may be possible, but not a disinterested state. We have said that goodwill may overcome the neighbour next door, but not the nation across the water. Thus we have allowed to be done in our names, by the state, deeds which would bow us in perpetual shame if we committed them ourselves. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this is in the confession of the Italian statesman, Cavour: "If we did ourselves what we are doing for Italy we would be great rogues."

Jesus made a further claim in Jerusalem, not so much by what he said, but by what he did. He claimed that the basis of society, no less than of individual life, must be spiritual. After entering the city he went straight to the temple—to worship. John tells us that during the day he preached and at night prayed on the Mount of Olives. As he wrestled with the evils and the problems of the city he continued to practice religion. God, worship, prayer still held first place in his thinking. Quietly, in his own way, he was asserting that the very activities of Jerusalem can and must rest on the living God.

TAKING one of Winston Churchill's phrases out of the dark crucible of 1940, Lowell Russell Ditzen, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Utica, New York, asks, "When are your finest hours?" One of our finest hours, he suggests, comes when we look at ourselves and our task in the knowledge that we can be useful and our task is worthy.

Our Finest Hours

It's an amazing truth that we can change a fact by our attitude. A brick-layer looks at his task and says, "I have a lowly job—mixing mortar and slapping bricks together. It's a picayune business and I'm weary of it all." That is truth for him. His own deadened spirit makes the work deadly.

But if there could be some change in that man's attitude, the fact of the work would be changed. Should he say, "Stop and look here my friend. See this home I'm building? Within these walls a young couple will rear their children, know love and bend the future. My work helps the home, the family, the course of history. It's a great job and I pray that I may do it well," then he would pursue his work with zest.

One of the most poignant myths of the ancients tells of the eager plea made by a young man, Phaeton, to drive the swift chariot of the sun. By insistent wheedling the youth is granted his chance. But inevitable tragedy comes. The wild strength of the horses is beyond the strength of young Phaeton. Control is lost and the burning chariot comes too near the earth. The land parches, rivers become dry and mountains rise out of the diminishing oceans to form the islands. In fear and despair all creation pleads to Jupiter for release from the scorching. Reluctantly, but in the necessity, the chief of the gods looses thunderbolts to kill the tragic Phaeton. Ovid adds to the sad tale that the following inscription was placed on the luckless youth's tomb:

> "He could not rule his father's car or fire
> Yet, it was much to so nobly aspire."

It may be that like Phaeton we stumble and fall in the work we set out to do, but there is undiminished glory if we set out to do it greatly.

Secondly, it is one of our finest hours when we say "yes" rather than "no" to a worthy call for some constructive action. T. E. Murphy put it vividly: "Living is more than watching and listening. It is doing. I believe

in the heresy that it is more fun to kiss a pretty girl myself than to watch some shadowy figment go through the motion on the screen. I would rather bat a ball to a bunch of kids than watch Joe DiMaggio hit a home run. Evenings, I would rather paint a picture or bake a cherry pie than to sit on my calluses listening to time-worn allusions to Al Jolson's age, Jack Benny's miserliness or Bob Hope's nose."

The charming Swiss resort of Lucerne offers many alurements for the travelers. Here one may have pleasant hours. But there is a grotto in the heart of the city where a monument, standing in majestic silence, calls the sojourners to the hours that are finest. Framed by trees and shrubs, the gay become sober, the loud become quiet as they look on the "lion of Lucerne" carved in a sheer face of rock. The monument commemorates the Swiss guards who were killed to the man as they stood in defense of Louis XVI in the Tuileries palace of Paris at the time of the French Revolution. In the dead stillness the monument thunders a living truth to the conscience—"Victory comes to those who serve. Even in death, the doers Live."

Certainly in the spiritual life Jesus calls us to a way of active commitment. He begins with, "Come unto me." An active, moving response is required. But as we come to him with our first devotion we find him ever ahead of us challenging and demanding more.

"Jesus, I have put you off and evaded you long enough. Now here I stand ready to accept your will, open to your thought and willing to follow you to the end." A fine hour, that!

Then too, it's a fine hour when, from the summit of our years, we see the dividends of faithfulness. It's a splendid moment when, what once seemed dull and uninteresting, as we strove to do the right, to be stedfast, to be faithful, is not grey with dullness but is aglow with purpose and with light.

I am sure it was a fine hour for Paul when, in his early years, on the road to Damascus, he felt the presence of the Lord. But it was an even finer hour when, an old man in prison, his life's journey soon to end, he could affirm, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith!"

Who will deny that this is a great hour: when a man turns at eventide from the long way he has come and faces into the gathering darkness with a song in his heart?

MR. NORMAN THOMAS, perennial candidate of the Socialist Party for President of the United States, was to speak one day to a distinguished group of leaders from many areas of life. The chairman emphasized the great respect Mr. Thomas enjoyed in his introductory remarks. He spoke of his scholarship, courage, and absolute integrity that had won the almost universal respect of all ranks among his fellowmen. Mr. Thomas's comment when he arose to speak was brief and pointed: "I would gladly exchange some of this respect for a little support!"

The way of life Jesus taught and lived is held in universal esteem and respect today but too few practice it in daily living.—Francis C. Wheaton, First Baptist Church; Cleveland, Ohio.

"Will people ever dispense with religion? Not as long as they are human; not as long as there is that inner compulsion to create and grow; not as long as man, to live, must love the universe."—V. A. K.

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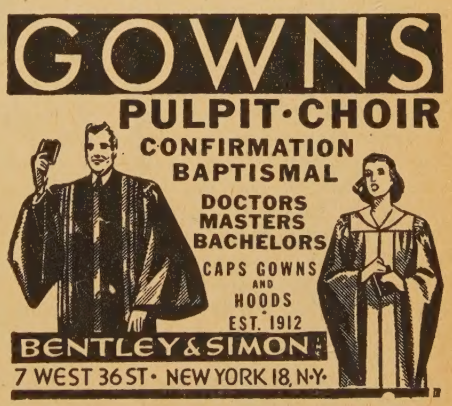

On Being Original

By F. GERALD ENSLEY

IT IS highly important to be original. The world pays its fattest rewards and keeps its loftiest fame for the man who can create. We are all interested in the new. The most harmful indictment of any utterance is: *old stuff!* The pressure to be original certainly is on any one who would capture the contemporary ear or eye.

So imperious is this demand for originality, as touching the preacher, that it leads him into two temptations. He may want the appearance of originality so badly that he cribs the work of truly creative preachers and passes it off as his own, declaiming Fosdick, Buttrick, and Sockman without giving them their due. Or, the pulpiteer may exploit the only thing he possesses which is original—his own experience. He gives an unseemly exposure to the public of what he has felt and thought and done. The former offense sins against honesty and the latter against good taste.

Is there a better way? Can the ordinary man be fresh and interesting without either questionable borrowing or undue self-exposure? To answer this question we must understand the nature of true originality.

I

First, we need to note the important distinction between novelty and originality. Novelty proposes ideas which are new in the common sense of the word, ideas which no one has ever heard of before. Some of us when striving to be original really are straining to be novel. And it is a strain, too high for most to attain unto it! Our consolation should be, however, that the great creative minds rarely have claimed novelty for themselves. When Edison was once complimented as an inventive genius, he replied, "I am a good sponge. I absorb ideas and put them to use. Most of my ideas belonged first to other people who didn't bother to develop them." F. H. Bradley, whose *Appearance and Reality* is one of the landmarks in the philosophy of the twentieth century, could say, "If I had succeeded in owing more, I might then perhaps have gained more of a claim to being original." As for letters, Shakespeare's indebtedness to Plutarch for his plots is well-known, while Emerson, lauding self-reliance, can also say that all literature since Plato has been quotation. Hence, the preacher who sweats for something absolutely new to say is hardly companion to the truly creative spirits.

II

Originality is not the search for the novel. Rather, *it is the process of so giving a new form to old ideas that they possess new validity.* The true creator works over old material in such a fashion that it comes forth with the mark of the creator's individuality upon it. The true creator differs from the seeker after novelty in that he is not afraid to borrow from others; and he differs from the plagiarist in that

he transforms his take until it is his own. A hen is an illuminating study in creativity. In one sense there is nothing in an egg that a hen has not picked up somewhere. Yet, an egg is quite different from the grass, grain, or table scraps that went into its production. The hen takes material unfit for human use and by the mysteries of the creative process invests it with a highly palatable form.

Creativity in the pulpit is not essentially different. The fertile minds are not those who strain for novel ideas, but those who take old themes and throw new light upon them. The truly independent brain does not search for thoughts never entertained by human consciousness but stamps the common stock of religious notions with the trademark of its own treatment. So Cornelius Woelfkin could say to his philosopher-friend, William DeWitt Hyde, "Though I graze in your fields I try to give my own milk." Or, Spurgeon could confess, "I am the biggest thief in England, but I defy anyone to catch me at it." Or, still further, Phillips Brooks' opponents could allege that he was unfamiliar with contemporary Biblical criticism, because he never quoted it in his sermons. His biographer points out that, on the contrary, he read widely in the higher criticism, but so skillful was his working over of the material that the finished sermon bore no trace. It was as difficult to estimate what he had been reading as for the layman to guess from the look of an egg what the hen had been eating. True originality, has, thus, two coefficients: (1) an old or common material, upon which (2) a new form has been imposed.

III

It is difficult to take a snapshot of the creative process. There is a noteworthy instance, however, in a volume of sermons by Dean Emeritus Charles R. Brown of Yale, entitled *Being Made Over*. We can be certain that some time previously he had read a book by his friend, George A. Coe—*Motives of Men*—for he quotes Dr. Coe directly several times. But in one case he recreates what he finds.

On page 79 of the Coe volume we read these words:

> Said a youthful and inexperienced fish to an old and experienced one in the long, long ago before there were any land animals, "What fun it is to leap into the air! I wonder what it would be like to live on the land and only occasionally take a bath in water, just as we live in the water and only occasionally take a bath in air." "Nonsense!" replied the old and experienced fish. "Nobody could enjoy living in the air. How would one breathe? Your gills would dry up, and you would suffocate. The idea is contrary to nature and perfectly preposterous!"

Now see what the Dean does with it (*Being Made Over,* page 70):

> We are told that in the long ago, when the process of organic evolution was operating, the tadpoles in a certain pond held a mass meeting. It was held under water, naturally, because that was where they lived. But a few ambitious young tadpoles stood up and told the meeting that they had gotten their heads above water. They had found that there was something else which could be breathed—it was called air. They had taken a few whiffs of it themselves and had found it very stimulating. While they had their heads above water they had seen certain forms of life

jumping about on the shore and they seemed to be enjoying themselves tremendously.

But the older tadpoles shook their heads and remarked that the whole thing was impossible. "We never have breathed anything but water, and all this talk about living on dry land is just another of the follies of youth." So they remained tadpoles and lived under water, swimming around with their tails for the rest of their days.

The young fellows broke away from the habits which had held them back; they made the venture of faith, accepting for themselves the will of the Creator. And after a long, hard struggle, they became air-breathing animals themselves and moved about upon the shore with the other frogs. They moved up in the scale of being and helped to introduce a higher order of life around that pond.

Hear then the Parable of the Frog-pond: "Trust God, see all, be not afraid! Be our joy three parts pain! Strive and hold cheap the strain!" It was a wise man who said, "Nature knows nothing of mass-production. The adaptable and courageous individual makes the new type." Mend your beliefs! Mend your ways! Mend your aims, that you may "prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God concerning you."

This is true originality. Dean Brown took another's idea but so reworked it that it came from his mind with the force of a new creation. The end-result is Brown, though the source is Coe.

This process of imposing a new form upon old material may itself take a number of forms. Creativity may commonly be seen in *a new organization*. Truths already known are articulated in a new way. Dr. Will Mayo used to say that in Rochester they assembled ideas from every source and that all he and his brother did was to provide strings for the bundles! Familiar notions may be ordered in a new sequence. The writer once heard Dr. Buttrick say that if he were preaching on, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," he would reverse it and discuss, "the life, the truth, and the way."

IV

Originality may take the form of a *new emphasis*. There has been much ink spilt over Jesus' originality. Probably it lies here. Jewish scholars often have maintained that everything the Master taught is to be found in the Talmud, to which Wellhausen, the famous Biblical critic, once replied, "Yes, all,—and much more." The pure wheat of morality was in the teaching of the Rabbis, but the tares were there, also. To discern and separate the essentials—love of God and man—from the purely ceremonial and give them prominence is an act of no mean creativity.

V

Again, originality may consist in tracing *new relationships*. Here is the secret of the great expository tradition which takes familiar texts and points out implications the rest of us never have seen. It brings to light nuances of meaning hidden in figures of speech, supplies silent premises, and draws out skeins of connection between the sacred page and life. No one who has ever observed Alexander MacLaren, Alexander Whyte, or James Black "open up" a passage of scripture can question the creative genius required.

Once more, as a corollary to the foregoing, originality may mean *the further application* of old truths. This is another facet of Jesus' originality. He stretched the familiar concept, "neighbor," to include anyone in need. "God," under his teaching, became the Father of the Gentile as well as the Jew. He announced that the "Kingdom of God," a centuries-old hope of Israel, was in their midst. In him the long-awaited Messiah had come. He took the common symbols of the Hebrew religion and applied them in a fashion so different as to be new.

VI

Finally, originality may be giving *a new expression* to an old theme. Henry Ward Beecher once remarked facetiously at a mutton dinner, "When that sheep bleats again, it will be in my pulpit!" When the sheep spoke through Beecher it spoke a different language. So the Gospel truths pass through the alembic of a true preacher's mind and come forth in their essential content but with a new vocabulary, unexpected turns of expression, fresh figures of speech, independent phrasing. Herndon tells us that he once loaned his law partner one of Theodore Parker's sermons on, *The Effect of Slavery on the American People*. Lincoln returned it with the following sentence underlined, "Democracy is self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people." Years later it appeared in the Gettysburg Address as, "government of the people, by the people, for the people"—in substance the some but creatively improved in its expression. At its best, novel expression goes beyond improvements in phrasing to imaginative representation, which soars in the lyric utterance of the prophet.

The test of originality, as we suggested in our definition, is *a new validity*. Under the touch of a truly creative spirit, that which has been mere doctrine or theory becomes real and operative. As we have said, the content of Christian teaching came from the Hebrew tradition, but the Master laid his hand upon some of the beliefs of Israel and so wrought them into his own life that they moved and transformed human lives. Mere doctrines about God became assured convictions by which they could live. Jesus divulged very little that men had not already surmised. Nor did he make their beliefs theoretically more valid. He so vitalized the old intuitions that his hearers needed no other proof. The final criterion of originality lies in whether an old idea can be given the force of a new truth.

VII

The moral of the story is, the preacher's business is neither to toil for novelty or sensation, nor to trade upon the privacies of his own life; nor, still worse, to descend to unrelieved plagiarism. His task is to make the rich heritage of the Christian tradition so much a part of himself that ideas long known move again in men's midst, full of grace and truth.

Bacon in his *Novum Organum* distinguished three men of science: those like the ant, which only collects and uses; those like the spider, which makes cobwebs out of his own substance; and those like the bee, which gathers her material from the flowers of field and garden but transforms and digests it into sweetness by a power of her own. In the spirit of this article may the writer combine a new application of this parable with a thoroughly "original" emendation of Proverbs 6:6: "Go to the bee, thou preacher; consider her ways and be wise!"

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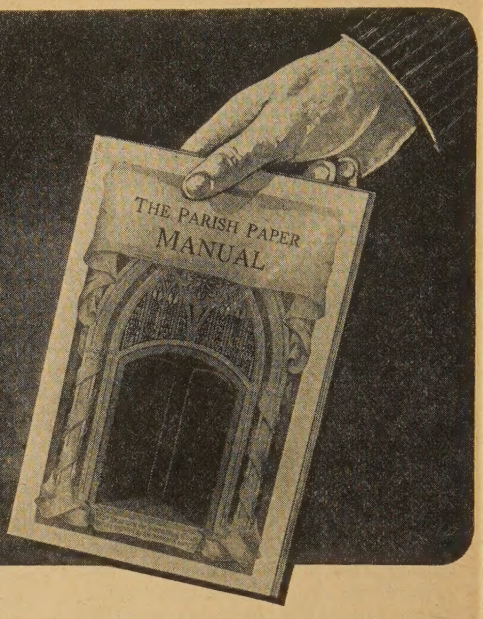

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